

Cultivar Preservation / Guardian Gardens Annual Report for 2018

Two committee reports are merged this year into one, as the activities of the year were so often shared.

After several years of frenetic rescues and rapid increase in Guardian Gardens membership, 2018 was planned to be a year to catch our breaths, consolidate gains, and make adjustments to the process for a smoother operation. The attention brought to Guardian Gardens in the pages of the popular web magazine *Gardenista* proved that we needed to have done all that a bit sooner. The Guardian Gardens program that had doubled its membership every year of its existence suddenly tripled its membership and now stands just shy of 200 GGers. It is still growing.

Some of the adjustments to Guardian Gardens have been made, and the recordkeeping is now shared by additional administrators while we envision whether and how to merge HIPS's three spreadsheets (Commercial Sellers, HIPS Gardens, and Guardian Gardens) to make a more reporter- and user-friendly single compendium of iris data. It is good to remember that this is a hurdle – a sizable hurdle – we face because we are the only horticultural organization trying to gather all this information for gardeners. That data for 2018 is still coming in, but we can report that the Guardian Gardens program now preserves more than three thousand of the rarest cultivars of iris, in every class.

The pace of garden rescues had been a flood in past years, as HIPS's readiness to undertake these massive projects opened the gates to much that had been held in abeyance by their owners, awaiting such resources. That pace, at least for private gardens, slowed a little in 2018, as rescue projects were completed one-by-one, but it was not a year of leisure. One private garden, that of Carol Kuhlmann, offered up a treasure-house of irises that were steered into several GG sanctuaries for safekeeping until increase can be distributed more widely. Another garden being reduced was that of Charlie Carver, who needed to make room for the National Collections he is amassing for the American Iris Society. Mr. Carver's irises, emerging in almost weekly installments all summer long, were carefully replanted to be able to disperse them more securely and efficiently in the 2019 sharing season.

On the institutional front, the pace quickened. The Iowa Arboretum undertook the creation of a collection of the irises of Agnes Whiting, with cultivars offered to them by Cathy Egerer, who also continued to share her Sturtevant collection with the Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott, Arizona. HIPS also is helping the Northeast Minnesota Municipal Iris Garden to locate and gather irises by that state's hybridizers, and continues to provide more rarities to the Sass Memorial Garden in Nebraska. The iris holdings at Thomas Jefferson's Virginia home, Monticello – a garden initially created by HIPS members – were slated by that institution's leadership for downsizing, and several Guardian Gardeners and HIPS members were involved in

relocating the excess of that collection among several sites, including to James Madison's home, Montpelier. Institutional collaborations are expanding, and HIPS is in discussions with the American Public Gardens Association to ensure that we share the highest standards for plant preservation.

Farther afield, HIPS members in the U.S. arranged another international exchange with counterparts in England, to restore to each nation cultivars that had gone missing in their countries of origin, and Catherine Adam in France steered similarly "missing" irises from France to the U.S. to aid HIPS members in augmenting the new program of Breeder Collections.